

Internal Branding in Universities and the Lessons Learnt From the Past: The Significance of Employee Brand Support and Transformational Leadership

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Abstract

The paper reviews the literature on the concept of internal branding and its effects in the service sector in general, as well as in UK universities. In addition, the concept of employee brand support is reviewed, discussing the influence of leadership characteristics on internal branding in universities. Employee brand support is a crucial element to successful internal branding activities. A great concern is that the knowledge of internal branding and employee brand support in higher education institutions is based on knowledge imported from the business sector, and more practices should thus be adapted and implemented. It is found that transformation leadership, despite being little researched in the internal branding context, remains the pivotal element to the successful implementation of internal branding, as transformational leadership provides space for intellectual stimulation and consideration of individuals that are present at universities. Potential future research areas for internal branding studies are identified and discussed.

Keywords – Internal branding, transformational leadership, employee brand support, higher education, universities, internal marketing.

Introduction

Developing the organization brand from inside has been acknowledged as an important area of research in the marketing literature (Judson, Aurand, & Gorchels, 2006). From a resource-based perspective, it is suggested that organizations can gain competitive advantage through their unique combination of resources, with people as the most important asset (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Leberecht, 2004). Aligning the behavior of employees with brand values, internal branding has been recognized as a new phenomenon, which has become important for universities in the present increasingly competitive markets (Judson et al., 2006; Whisman, 2009). In the UK, it seems that universities are increasingly employing some kind of marketing activity and branding program (Ivy, 2001; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2004; Bunzel, 2007), even though these tend to be unsystematic in nature (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2004; Maringe, 2010). Although corporate branding and the ways in which higher education institutions create their corporate identity have been studied (e.g., Melewar & Akel, 2005; Judson et al., 2006; Balmer & Liao, 2007; Atakan & Eker, 2007; Whisman, 2009; Celly & Knepper, 2010), studies are not closely related to the academic staff of universities.

The purpose of this paper is a review of the literature on the concepts of internal branding in UK universities, employee brand support and the characteristics of transformational leadership, as well as the theoretical relationship between the concepts in general. The UK is interesting to the present study in that UK universities today are increasingly competing for international students in response to trends in global student mobility, diminishing university funding and government-backed recruitment campaigns. This competition drives the need for universities to focus on clearly articulating and developing their brand, from the inside out (Cartmella, Binsardi, & McLean, 2011; Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007). The paper

thus asks: (RQ) What is the theoretical relationship, if any, between internal branding activities (i.e., employee brand support) and transformational leadership? The study has three main research objectives (RO):

- (1) RO1: To identify gaps in ‘internal branding’ in universities and particularly in the UK higher education institutions.
- (2) RO2: To review the related literature in different management disciplines on ‘internal branding’ and relate them to internal branding in the context of higher education.
- (3) RO3: To study whether the past literature has supported any relationship between ‘internal branding activities’ and ‘transformational leadership’.

The paper is structured as follows: The review first provides a background by discussing the concept of internal branding within the service sector in general. Following this, past studies on the effect of internal branding in universities, i.e., employee brand support, are reviewed. Next, transformational leadership characteristics and the influence of transformational leaders on internal branding and employee brand support are presented. Finally, gaps in the research are identified and discussed.

Literature Review

What is internal branding?

According to Hatch and Schultz (2001), a branding program which aligns with corporate vision, corporate culture and corporate image can build a strong corporate brand. Several authors (e.g., Ind, 1997, 2007; Tosti & Stotz, 2001; Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2004) mention the importance of coordinating internal and external branding programs. Ind (2007, p.123) advises organizations to use the “internal marketing of external campaigns” in order to ensure that branding campaigns can be supported easily by their employees. The idea of

‘inclusive branding’ (Schmidt & Ludlow, 2002, p.204) suggests that the management of branding activities which pays attention to both internal and external stakeholders can reduce the risk of treating any group of stakeholders in “an unacceptable, unproductive or neglectful way”. Moreover, in accordance with LePla and Parker (1999), if all the actions and messages of a company which are based on their brand values are consistently conveyed to both customers and people inside the company, the company will be able to produce products and services which match its strengths more precisely. Consequently, the company will be able to establish greater levels of trust and build stronger customer loyalty (LePla & Parker, 1999). Tosti and Stotz (2001, p.30) support the view that “external marketing and advertising efforts can attract customers, but it takes an entire company working together to keep those customers”. They therefore advise that ‘internal branding’ should also be applied and developed further (Tosti & Stotz, 2001). According to Vallaster and de Chernatony (2004), internal branding programs can facilitate brand-supportive behavior by aligning employees’ behavior with the brand messages (brand promise) communicated to customers.

Although internal branding activities are found to be increasingly operated in the service industries, Burmann and König (2011) claim from the internal branding literature in this particular area that it is still a young research field. Terms such as ‘internal branding’, ‘employee branding’, ‘internal marketing’ and ‘relationship marketing’ are often used in marketing literature and these terms pay attention to the engagement of internal stakeholders in organization missions and planning. These concepts view employees as one of the important target groups in the audience for marketing communication activities. However, relationship marketing, according to Gronroos (1994), is a process of establishing, maintaining, and enhancing long-term relationships with customers and other stakeholders. Therefore, relationship marketing is likely to pay attention to a variety of audience groups

(both internal and external stakeholders), i.e., “influencers (such as the EU, Government or financial bodies), those referring customers (such as brokers and advisers), employment agencies, suppliers and internal workforce” (Dibb & Simkin, 2000, p.492). Internal branding, in contrast, focuses on communicating the main corporate brand value to the employees (Tosti & Stotz, 2001). Punjaisri and Wilson (2007, pp.58-59) agree that “internal branding has emerged as a key process to align the behavior patterns of employees with the brand values”.

From the relationship marketing point of view, Miles and Mangold (2004) use the term “internal relationship management” in order to connect the concepts of employee branding, internal marketing, and relationship marketing. Miles and Mangold (2004, p.68) define the term ‘employee branding’ as “the process by which employees internalize the desired brand image and are motivated to project the image to customers and other organizational constituents”. Therefore, the similarity between the concepts of internal branding and employee branding is that employees are expected to behave in alignment with the brand. Employee branding uses the organization’s system and internal marketing activities in order to motivate employees to support the brand (Miles & Mangold, 2004). Rafiq and Ahmed (1993, p.221) also stress that “the best way to get motivated employees is to use marketing techniques in the internal marketplace”.

Papasolomou and Vrontis (2006) insist that internal marketing activities can be used to build the corporate brand. According to Ahmed and Rafiq (2002), the term ‘internal marketing’ appeared to have been first used by Berry, Hensel and Burke (1976). Rafiq and Ahmed (1993, p.221) highlight that “the concept of internal marketing is based on the idea of employee as a customer”. That is, internal marketing focuses staff attention on changing

internal activities in order to improve an organization's performance (e.g., Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002; Mosley, 2007). Employees must be effectively trained and motivated in customer contact in order to provide customer satisfaction (Mosley, 2007). Internal branding is seen by Hankinson (2004) as a consequence of the increasing interest in internal marketing. However, Mosley (2007) writes on what makes internal marketing different from internal branding (see Table 1).

< Insert Table 1 About Here >

Mosley (2007) notes that internal branding tends to adopt an inside-out (resource based) approach, while internal marketing tends to be absorbed with an outside-in approach. Mosley (2007) argues that internal marketing is a kind of customer-based management. The management of internal marketing focuses on communicating the customer brand promise, as well as the attitudes and behavior expected from employees to deliver on this promise by ensuring that the employees understand their part in delivering an on-brand customer experience (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002; Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006; Mosley, 2007). Davis and Dunn (2002) describe the brand promise as foreseeing how the customer will expect the company to act, with regard to what organizations have widely communicated through, for example, advertising and the use of mass media. Therefore, internal marketing activities may make employees feel that they are only 'a channel to market', resulting in inconsistent behavior in delivering on its promise (Mosley, 2007). In contrast, internal branding is seen as a value-based approach and more 'inside-out' (e.g., Mosley, 2007; Whisman, 2009). In order to ensure that employees can deliver brand promise, internal branding activities convey and communicate to employees the brand values which, according to Urde (2003), consist of: 1) the values inherent in the brand mission (of commitment to the overarching task) and vision

(as an inspiration and challenge for organization members). These direct the ways in which organization members should act in order to support the organization's brand; 2) organization values which enable employees to understand 'what we are', 'what our organization stands for' and 'what it is that makes us who we are' (which will therefore enable internal stakeholders to act in a way that supports the brand); and 3) core values which sum up the brand and reveal the deepest values reinforcing the brand's essence. Mosley (2007) concludes that internal marketing, compared to internal branding, tends to be an outside-in approach which lacks the brand values communicated to employees. Therefore, internal marketing can be seen as a form of customer-based management, while internal branding can be seen as a resource-based form of management, which reinforces a common-value-based culture (Mosley, 2007).

As a result of the growing literature on internal branding (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011), the concept has now been defined in several ways. Nevertheless, the focus of internal branding is to reduce the difference between the desired corporate brand and that perceived by the company's stakeholders (Mitchell, 2002; Urde, 2003; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). Internal branding, according to Mitchell (2002, p.100), is about clearly communicating "what makes the company special". Moreover, internal branding is the term used by Urde (2003) to sum up the relationship between the organization and the brand, including ways of ensuring that the organization lives up to its branding. Punjaisri and Wilson (2011, p.2) state that "internal branding is about ensuring that the brand promise is transformed by employees into reality, reflecting the espoused brand values that set customers' expectations" In addition, internal branding is explained by Tosti and Stotz (2001) as a process of promoting the main corporate brand to the employees in such a way that they understand the connection between brand delivery and brand promise. Tosti and Stotz (2001) claim that brand promise can win

customers. However, to satisfy customers, it is crucial for an organization to deliver what the brand promises to its customers (Tosti & Stotz, 2001; Schultz & de Chernatony, 2002). Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) also state that the success of corporate branding “largely [relies] on employees’ attitudes and behavior in delivering the brand promise to external stakeholders” (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007, p.58). de Chernatony (2002) asserts that when employees deliver the brand promise spontaneously, it makes better performance more likely. However, in order for employees to deliver the brand promises, Davis and Dunn (2002) suggest that organizations should ensure that their employees understand ‘what the brand stands for’ and ‘why it is special and unique’. This shows that the representation and the distinctiveness of the brand can be used to describe the brand values (Urde, 2003). Therefore, to enable people on the inside to deliver what the brand has promised to customers, the values of the brand need to be clearly understood (Urde, 2003).

Internal branding can also be seen as a process of aligning employees’ behavior with a corporate brand’s identity (Burmenn & Zeplin, 2005). Burmann and Zeplin (2005) present a holistic model for internal brand management, derived from identity-based brand management, focusing on the role of employees in ensuring the consistency of brand identity. They note that a brand is “just like a person – [it needs] to have a consistent and continuous identity in order to be trusted” (Burmenn & Zeplin, 2005, p.279). From the corporate behavior perspective, van Riel and Balmer (1997) argue that “identity is about the ethos, aims and values that present a sense of individuality that can help to differentiate the organization within its competitive environment”. According to Urde (2003), brand identity is likely to be inferred from brand values; it is developed in order to fulfil the organization’s values, overall mission and vision.

Scholars note that internalizing brand values and communicating brand values to employees in order to align their understanding of these values is mainly what the internal branding literature stresses. Vallaster and de Chernatony (2004), for example, define the term ‘internal branding’ as the alignment of employees’ behavior with brand values. Aurand, Gorchels, and Bishop (2005, p.164) describe internal branding as “promoting the brand to employees and educating them about brand values”. According to Ind (2007), brand values define “the beliefs of the organization. They are connected to a way of thinking and behaving” (Ind, 2007, p.126). Tosti and Stotz (2001) also claim that values can describe an ideal way of behaving. Moreover, Vallaster and de Chernatony (2004, p.3) suggest that “employees must be informed about the core values of the brand and ideally understand them, in order to live and reproduce the value in any of their actions and interaction”. As discussed in the previous literature, internal branding activities communicate the brand values, which are: 1) the values inherent in the brand mission and vision; 2) organization values and 3) core values (Urde, 2003). Urde (2003) notes that all these values will repeatedly recall the brand identity. From an empirical study undertaken by O’Reilly and Chatman (1986), it seems that the greater the match between brand values and employees’ values, the more likely it is that the attitudes and behavior of employees will be consistent with the brand promise. In order for employees to behave consistently with the external branding efforts, Aurand et al. (2005) state that internal branding is vital in organizations because its intention is to educate the employees and to train them to promote the brand values. According to Punjaisri and Wilson (2009, p.210) the belief that “internal branding could shape employees’ behavior is largely based on the assumption that when employees understand and are committed to the brand values ... they will perform in ways that live up to customers’ brand expectations”. Hence, organizations need to realize the importance of their values and enable their employees to understand these values in order to deliver the services appropriately.

Several authors (e.g., Urde, 2003; Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2004; Aurand et al., 2005; Mosley, 2007) agree that internal branding is about aligning employee behavior with brand values. However, in order to embody the values of the brand, Ind (2007, p.1) explains that “the organization’s purpose and values by themselves are not enough. Organizations need to build meaning into the ideas so that employees can genuinely live the brand in their day-to-day lives”. Nevertheless, Ind (2007, p.1) claims that “values are not created – they exist – [the] issue is how well they are articulated and embedded”. Urde (2003) states that the goal of an internal branding process is “to get the organization to live its brands” (Urde, 2003, p.102). According to Karmark (2005), living the brand relates to the values of the brand and organization. ‘Living the brand’ suggests that the employees will internalize brand values, thus enabling them to deliver the brand promises to consumers in a natural manner (Karmark, 2005).

Perspectives of internal branding

As mentioned in the section above, in order for employees to understand the values inherent in the brand and organization, it is clear that organizations tend to operate internal branding activities by means of two approaches: 1) a marketing and communications based perspective and 2) a norms and values communications based perspective. The differences between these perspectives are listed in Table 2.

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From the marketing and communications based perspective, employees are seen as the target audiences for the company’s brand communication. Leaving brand values open for employees to interpret by themselves may entail considerable risk (Kunde, 2000). Hence,

brand values need to be communicated to them carefully and efficiently. Kunde (2000, p.171) also suggests that organizations should “carefully [ensure] that people are committed and understand and accept both the whys and hows of brand delivery”. The primary ways for employees to understand and deliver the brand are internal communications, a brand book and other manuals and training and development (Karmark, 2005; Ind, 2007; van Riel, 1995). A recent study conducted by Punjaisri and Willson (2011, p.17) found that organizations use training and communication activities, i.e. briefings, group meetings, orientation and training, in order to ensure that a “set of customer’s expectation is enacted and delivered by employees”. In addition, organizations can communicate values through corporate visual identity, e.g., a university’s name, slogan and symbol (Melewar & Akel, 2005). The task for management is to formulate the brand values and communicate them to employees (Karmark, 2005). This perspective tends to be based on the corporate identity position, anchored in a strategic and visual perspective which focuses on identity as a corporate communication (van Riel, 1995). The management has an explicit role in the formulation of corporate identity and decides how the organization is made to appear to external audiences (Postmes, Tanis, & de Wit, 2001; van Riel, 1995).

From this perspective, the brand values are diffused throughout the organization from the top down. In other words, the brand values are vertically communicated in a formal communication style through work-related issues (Postmes et al., 2001). Therefore, internal communications should be ongoing, continuous and connected to training (Wilson, 2001). Karmark (2005) notes that internal branding from a marketing and communications based perspective emphasizes the issue of formal control because leaving the brand values open to interpretation may be considered risky. However, the problem with this perspective is that

brand values which are communicated through, for example, a brand book are unlikely to relate to employees' day-to-day operations (Aurand et al., 2005; Mosley, 2007).

The norms and values communications based perspective, in contrast, “builds on the premise that the personal values of the employee become congruent with the brand values” (Karmark, 2005, p.106). That is, the employees' attitudes and behavior should be aligned with the organization's values (de Chernatony, 1999). The mechanisms involved in an internal branding program are more closely linked to fostering employee identification through the use of ‘cultural tools’, such as storytelling and events, which may bring about emotional attachment (Aurand et al., 2005; Kunde, 2000). The employees' identification is fostered through sponsorships, which serve both to build the brand's image among consumers and also to foster identification among employees (Ind, 2007; Mosley, 2007).

Furthermore, this perspective tends to be based on the organizational identity perspective (Karmark, 2005) which focuses on the way in which an organization's members make sense of issues relating to the question of “who are we? or who am I?” as employees of an organization in the context of the organizational culture (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000, p.13) and a collective shared understanding of the organization's distinctive values and characteristics (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). A strong corporate culture within the organization will support employees' identification with the brand (Kunde, 2000; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; Morsing, 2006). The organizational culture includes the vision and the strategies of the company (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). They can encourage people at all levels of the organization to commit themselves to the brand (King & Grace, 2005).

From this perspective, brand values are likely to be communicated to employees in a horizontal communication style (Karmark, 2005), which relies on informal interpersonal and socio-emotional interactions with colleagues in the organization (Postmes et al., 2001). Therefore, when it comes to the issue of control, it is clear that the norms and values based perspective is less concerned with direct/formal control than is the marketing and communication based perspective. Control, however, can also take the form of normative control, whereby management attempts to influence and guide employees' behavior by controlling the underlying experience, thoughts and feelings which influence behavior (Kunda, 1992 cited in Karmark, 2005, p.115).

Nevertheless, the problem with this perspective, noted by Karmark (2005), is that it risks building a brand culture which is isolated from external influences and internal criticism to the extent that it ends in vanity and self-seduction (Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Karmark, 2005). In addition, brand values may be understood only by employees who are very close to the origin of the values, e.g., the employees who work in the company's headquarters (Karmark, 2005). There is therefore a high possibility that new employees will find themselves excluded from the values commonly held by the organization. This also implies that "brand values, as they are held by organizational members, are cut off from the perceptions held by external stakeholders such as consumers" (Karmark, 2005, p.116). In order to replace direct/formal managerial control, this approach seeks to influence and direct employees' actions by controlling the feelings which influence behavior (Karmark, 2005, p.116). However, the perspective is focused on the result of strong brand values (Ind, 2007), which is essentially impossible to operate without any direct/formal managerial control because, as several authors agree, organizations need top management to adhere to and control these values (Karmark, 2005; Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2005, 2006, 2009).

Internal branding in service sector in general

In a service organization where there is interaction between contact employees and customers (the service encounter), aligning the behavior of employees with the organization's brand values, the so-called activities of internal branding, is as important as the activities of external branding (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). According to Keller (2007), a brand is used by a company to identify and differentiate its products and services from those of competitors. However, Schultz and de Chernatony (2002) stress that the success of branding largely relies on employees' behavior in delivering the brand to external stakeholders. de Chernatony and Segal-Horn (2003) also suggest that a service brand is more likely to succeed when its own employees believe in the organization's brand values and act accordingly.

Internal branding is generally implemented in service sectors, e.g., charity organizations (Hankinson, 2004), financial service organizations (de Chernatony & Cottam, 2006), hospitals (Gapp & Merrilees, 2006), airlines (Chong, 2007), hotels (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2009, 2011) and shared-service call centers (Burmam & König, 2011). Internal branding is about aligning employees' behavior with brand values by promoting and educating them about the brand values (Aurand et al., 2005). Burmann and König (2011, p.376) note that what is perceived behind internal branding is the significant role of employees in building the brand. A study on internal brand management in shared-service call centers conducted by Burmann and König (2011) suggests that communicating brand messages via the communication media, training activities and leaders can encourage employees to feel that they are part of the brand. Moreover, these brand-oriented communication activities were found to be "more important than empowerment and promotional prospects" (Burmam & König, 2011, p.374). Morhart, Herzog, and Tomczak (2009) conducted a study with 269 customer-contact employees. Leaders may influence internal branding by, for example,

persuading employees to support the brand (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005); facilitating behavioral changes consistent with the desired brand (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006) and being responsible for defining and driving a corporate brand's identity (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2009). The study shows that communicating brand value through leaders' characteristics can build employee actions to even go beyond the brand representative roles assigned by their organization.

Internal branding in a service sector pays particular consideration to the role of customer-contact employees (e.g., Gapp & Merrilees, 2006; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). A study on internal branding in the hotel industry by Punjaisri and Wilson (2011) found that communicating the brand through training and communication activities has a positive impact on the attitude and behavior of customer-contact employees in their delivery of the brand promise. The study shows that internal branding activities (e.g., training programs, daily briefings, group meetings and notice boards) encourage employees' sense of belonging to the brand and the alignment between employees' delivery of the brand and the brand promise (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). In the healthcare case study of Gapp and Merrilees (2006), positive impacts of internal branding activities on employees' behavior were found. The study shows that employees view the organization as a quality or healthy environment and deliver these values to patients as the result of internal branding activities. However, the study suggests that an organization's brand must be specifically communicated to each group of employees in a simple and convincing way, which is easy for the employees to understand and believe in (Gapp & Merrilees, 2006). Gapp and Merrilees (2006) stress that an organization must not over-promise the brand in order to ensure that its employees are capable of fulfilling the promise. Overall, the discussion above suggests that internal branding is generally implemented in service industries in order to communicate, express and

embed brand values among employees. The existing studies have found that internal branding activities have positive impacts on employees' behavior. That is, when internal branding activities are implemented in service organizations, employees are likely to behave in alignment with the brand of their organization.

Effects of internal branding

A company operates internal branding in order to persuade its employees to support the company brand. According to Schultz (2003), getting employees to support the company brand translates into getting the employees to deliver on what the brand promises to the consumer. Employees often play a crucial role in the success of corporate branding (Karmark, 2005; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007) because they are responsible for reducing the gap between the desired corporate brand identity and that perceived by the company's stakeholders (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006). In the branding literature, the relationship between the brand and the employee is conceptualized as *living the brand* (e.g., Ind, 2007; Karmark, 2005; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). The roles which an employee plays as a living brand (Karmark, 2005) are, in the examples, those of delivering the brand (Kunde, 2000), brand champion (Ind, 2007) and brand ambassador (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001), co-creator of the brand (Schultz, 2005) and brand citizenship (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). In order for employees to live a brand, they have to want to do it, i.e., management cannot force them to do it (Schultz, 2003; Mitchell, 2004). According to Karmark (2005), living the brand is linked to the values inherent in the brand and the organization. When employees live the brand, they will internalize these values, enabling them to deliver the brand promises to the consumer in a 'natural' way (Karmark, 2005).

In the literature, several authors pay attention to employees' behavior as an outcome of internal branding (e.g., Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2005, 2006; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007, 2011). It is generally concluded that the more internal branding is applied by management, the higher the likelihood that their employees' behavior will support the brand (e.g., Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Judson et al., 2006; Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2005, 2006). In line with a study conducted by Judson et al. (2006), internal branding activities are likely to assist an employee to have a clear understanding of her/his respective university's brand values and use these brand values in her/his everyday work. However, there are several terms which were used to refer to employees' behavior as an outcome of internal branding. Burmann and Zeplin (2005), for example, use the term 'brand commitment' in order to refer to employees' behavior as an outcome of internal branding. The term 'brand commitment' can be defined as "the extent of psychological attachment of employees to the brand, which influences their willingness to exert extra effort towards reaching the brand goals" (Burmann & Zeplin (2005, p.284). King and Grace (2008, p.9) explain how internal branding impacts on employees' relationship with the brand, such that "if employees perceive the relationship with the organization to be a positive one, worthy of maintaining, then employees have a high level of commitment to the organization. In addition, Vallaster and de Chernatony (2006) use the term 'brand adequate behavior' to refer to the brand related behavior of an employee if it is an effect of internal branding. Contrariwise, Punjaisri and Wilson (2011) argue that internal branding activities will lead to employees' brand identification, commitment and loyalty which will, in consequence, create brand performance. Brand performance, according to Punjaisri and Wilson (2009), is employees' brand-supporting behavior, which is the ability of a committed employee to understand brand values and enable him/her to deliver on the customers' brand expectations set by the brand promise.

Karmark (2005) points out that when brand values are communicated to employees, the latter tend to demonstrate behavior which supports the corporate brand ('living the brand'), including: 1) understanding the brand, 2) delivering the brand, 3) representing the brand and/or 4) being the brand. From the norm and value based perspective, through culture control, employees can be expected to communicate the brand wholeheartedly by representing the brand and/or being the brand; from a marketing and communication based perspective, as a result of communication activities, employees are only expected to understand the brand and to be able to deliver the brand (Karmark, 2005). The two differing views are discussed in detail, next.

From the marketing and communication based perspective, the role of the employee is "to deliver the brand's values to key stakeholders, primarily by following brand guidelines that specify the meaning of the brand values to the employees" (Karmark, 2005, p.109). It is agreed that employees become key actors in delivering the brand content and promise (Schultz, 2005). Karmark (2005) notes that when brand values are communicated to employees, they tend, from this perspective, to understand the brand and/or they can deliver the brand (i.e. by living the brand). As a result of internal branding and given the need for employees to live up to the brand (Urde, 2003), it is stated that the brand can go through a process of anthropomorphizing, of being a non-living object which becomes humanized or personalized (Fournier, 1998), for example, 'brand as a person' (Karmark, 2005). This includes the idea that an organization's brand and identity can have emotions (Aaker, 1996), personalities (Davies & Chun, 2003; Duboff, 1986) and unique characteristics/features (Balmer & Greyser, 2002) which give it specificity, stability and coherence (Cornelissen, 2006). It is noted that metaphors not only directly bring to mind a simple comparison

between a term and a concept, but also “generate inferences beyond the similarities required for their comprehension” (Cornelissen, 2005, p.754). In addition, “metaphors are often embedded in the deep structure of a text, rather than stated overtly” (Amernic, Craig & Tourish, 2007).

Henkel, Tomczak, Heitmann and Herrmann (2007) note that the theory of marketing control is an appropriate theoretical framework to clarify how an organization controls its employees, in order to ensure that they understand the brand and can consistently act in alignment with it. According to the theory of marketing control (Jaworski, 1988), control devices are designed to affect individual action (e.g., Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Jaworski, 1988; Jaworski, Stathakopoulos & Krishnan, 1993). As a result of controls, employees are more likely to behave in ways consistent with “organizational goals”, the “true aims of the organization” and/or the “best interests of the organization” (Jaworski, 1988, p.23). Formal control activities can be described as “written, management-initiated mechanisms that influence the probability that employees or groups will behave in ways that support the stated marketing objectives” (Jaworski, 1988, p.26). In contrast, informal controls are “unwritten, typically worker-initiated mechanisms that influence the behavior of individuals or groups ... This informal control may or may not be supportive of the stated marketing objectives” (Jaworski, 1988, p.26). Based on the descriptions of control, internal branding from the marketing and communication based perspective, consisting of internal brand communications and brand-centered training activities, can be seen as formal control activities which can therefore influence the probability that academic staff will behave in ways which support the institution’s brand (Jaworski, 1988). Moreover, in line with the social identity approach to organizations (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Haslam, 2001), the communication tools of internal branding from the marketing and communication based perspective (internal

communication and training and development), which tend to be less concerned with interpersonal relations and more with organizational and work-related issues, seem to be powerful determinants of commitment. This is because they are relevant to employees' self-definition as members of the organization (Postmes et al., 2001).

However, some authors (e.g., Mitchell, 2004; Karmark, 2005) note that internal corporate branding may not be able to make individual brand-supportive behavior consistent. Based on an observation by Edgar H Schein, Mitchell (2004) shows evidence that:

A few people convert, but their effect is pretty much cancelled out by an equally small number of fanatical resisters. That leaves the vast majority with their heads firmly below the parapet, going through only those motions that are necessary for them to survive until the storm has passed. So the net result of all those carefully crafted, expensive events, away-days, workshops, storytelling, sessions, dramatizations, cascading programs, internal videos and newsletters? Once the initial excitement has died down, it's a big round number: zero (Mitchell, 2004, p.30).

In addition, Mitchell (2004) suggests that the problem is that organizations may focus insufficiently on translating brand value into real-life experiences, whilst concentrating too much on changing employees' actions. Moreover, as noted by Karmark (2005), brand values which are communicated through the communication media, for example, brand books, are unlikely to relate to employees' day-to-day operations.

From the norm value based perspective, conversely, an employee's actions are directed by controlling the underlying experiences and feelings which influence behavior (Kunda, 1992 cited in Karmark, 2005, p.115). Vallaster and de Chernatony (2006, p.764) note that "the

norms enable employees to justify their behavior”. As discussed in the previous section, internal branding, from this perspective, fosters employee identification through the use of culture-embedding mechanisms, e.g., storytelling and events (Karmark, 2005). Vallaster and de Chernatony (2006, p.768) also support the view that “corporate culture is the carrier of stories and gossip that spread information about valued behavior and ‘heroic myths’ around the organization”. Through the use of culture tools, internal branding can therefore influence the brand related behavior of an employee, called ‘brand adequate behavior’ (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006).

The norm and value based perspective is likely to be based on the organizational identification theory (e.g., Albert et al., 2000). Informal communication channels which are generally related to the organizational identity tend to influence the behavior and attitudes of staff (Stuart, 2002). In addition, as stated in the previous section, this perspective is the approach to commitment in organizations and teams which assumes that commitment stems from interpersonal relations (Postmes et al., 2001). Employees are expected to identify with the organization brand. In other words, an employee’s values are congruent with the organization’s brand values. Therefore, the behavior of employees who support the organization brand can be expected to not only represent the brand wholeheartedly (as in ‘brand ambassador’) and to become the co-creator of the brand, but also to ‘be the brand’ (Karmark, 2005). As de Chernatony (2002) explains:

If the values are deeply rooted and coherently interlinked, then the relevance of the brand’s values and the connections staff make with the brand enable them to deliver the brand promise in a more natural manner, with passion and commitment. This, in effect, brings the brand to life and enhances the likelihood of a better performance (de Chernatony, 2002, p.122).

According to the case study of Nike and Patagonia by Ind (2007), employees are required to *be the brand*. However, in order for this to occur, their “attitudes and behavior at work as well as their entire lifestyle must be compatible” (Karmark, 2005, p.115). This can be achieved through company recruitment communications. Ind (2007) gives the example of Greenpeace, which in its interview process adopts a confrontational stance on environmental action and chooses the candidate whose goals and beliefs match most closely with the organization’s own. In this way, the organization tends to recruit employees who are able to embody the brand, since they have compatible attitudes and behavior at work and in their life as a whole.

Internal branding in universities

Internal branding is still a young research field in its literature (Burmann & König, 2011). Thus, the concept of internal branding in higher education institutions is recognized in the literature as a new phenomenon (Whisman, 2009). Although the concept of internal branding in higher education institutions is recognized in the literature as a new phenomenon (Whisman, 2009), Judson et al. (2006, 2009) found that when internal branding activities are implemented, employees are better able to reflect the brand values in their day-to-day operations.

The delivery of the brand promise to the employees of an institution has been recognized as having the same importance as delivering it to people outside the institution (Whisman, 2009). University employees are heavily influential in representing higher education institutions to the public (for example, in terms of staff reputation, research output and top quality teaching) (Naude & Ivy, 1999; Ivy, 2001). Baker and Balmer (1997, p.367) also

concern the fact that “individual members of a university are, by definition, experts in their own right and so consider that they are the best judge of how to fulfil this role”. Thus, if staff members do not clearly understand the institution’s brand values, their acts may reflect their own values more than the university’s brand values (Jevons, 2006). Besides, if they do not present an institution’s brand characteristics, the brand of the institution becomes unreliable (Stensaker, 2005). This is also emphasized by Schiffenbauer (2001 cited in Judson et al., 2006, p.99), that the brand message will lose its credibility if it is not supported by aligned employee behavior. Boone (2000) also notes:

Many companies do a brilliant job of advertising and marketing to customers. Then comes the part: delivering. While they put millions of dollars into marketing, most companies invest little to ensure that employees transform brand messages into reality in terms of the customer’s experience. It’s one thing to tell customers who you are and quite another to show them who you are. Employees have to be engaged to make the brand come alive. Therefore, the messages sent to employees about the brand are just as important as the one sent to customers (Boone, 2000, p.36).

Hence, there is a need for universities to align employee behavior with brand values. Stensaker (2005) supports the view that universities need to align employee behavior with brand values, stating that branding should rather be viewed as a process of mobilizing the best marketers there are – the staff and students of the institution. For these stakeholders to buy into the branding process, the image sought to be created must be rooted in the distinctive institutional characteristics staff and students think are important. If they don’t feel part of this process, even the most creative branding will not be trustworthy (Stensaker, 2005).

It is noted that employees' beliefs and actions may not match the externally generated brand image (Mitchell, 2004; Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Ind, 2007); hence, universities need to ensure the alignment of employees' attitudes and behavior with the corporate brand values. The alignment of employees' attitudes and behavior with the values of the corporate brand is viewed by Judson et al. (2006) as the main task of internal branding in universities. The concept of internal branding is recognized as a phenomenon which has become important for universities in the increasingly competitive markets (Judson et al., 2006). Although very few studies have been undertaken on internal branding in universities, according to Judson et al. (2006, 2009) and Whisman (2009), internal branding is applied in the business environment as well as in the university environment. In the empirical research of Judson et al. (2006) on 'building university brands from within', the internal branding concept is applied to the university environment. The study finds that "when internal branding efforts are implemented in universities, staff have a clearer understanding of their respective universities' brand values and are subsequently better able to use these brand values in their everyday work" (Judson et al., 2006, p.105). In addition, from the administrators' perspective, these activities positively affect their behavior in performing their job, how they manage their staff and how their staff uses the brand in everyday work (Judson et al., 2009). Therefore, the internal brand building process is likely to be even more important for universities.

Internal branding in higher education institutions: the focused perspective

The literature on internal branding and its potential effects from both perspectives is presented in the above sections. It can be concluded that internal branding can build employees' behavior to support their organization brand in different ways, depending on the way in which internal branding activities operate. Karmark (2005) suggests a combination of

the two perspectives for use in organizations. Within a higher education context, according to a study undertaken by Henkel (1997), higher education institutions are being transformed into corporate enterprises. This transformation tends to emphasize direct control over employees (Henkel, 1997). It is noted that the security of academic tenure, a simple career structure, independence of working (e.g., teaching and research) and an emphasis on equal values in the allocation of work, all of which represent deeply held academic values, tend to be no longer applied (Henkel, 1997). The roles and responsibilities of academics seem to be increasingly well-defined (Henkel, 1997). Higher education institutions are adopting strategies to enhance institutional performance in the form of function differentiation. For example, “research only contracts for ‘star performances’, teaching only contracts for those still on the edges of the profession (or those who do not publish)” (Henkel, 1997, p.138).

De Boer, Jürgen, and Liudvika (2007) further support the argument that a higher education institution as a corporate actor is being transformed from a loosely coupled system – “with autonomous units” (Weick, 1976, p.8) – into a more tightly coupled system, in which freedom of choice is likely to be limited (Weick, 1976, p.8). According to Ind (2007), in an organization which has highly explicit codes of behavior, such as the army, religious institutions and educational institutions, it may be risky if those who work in these institutions adapt their idea of self to their day-to-day operation. Therefore, it seems that the norms and values communications based perspective, which emphasizes the (indirect) control of the underlying experience, thoughts and feelings which influence behavior (Karmark, 2005), may not be applicable in this context.

From the marketing and communications based perspective, brand values tend to be diffused throughout the organization from the top down by formally communicating the brand values

through internal communications, training and development activities (Karmark, 2005). The study by Postmes et al. (2001) suggests that vertical communications (i.e., formal communications) are more closely related to levels of commitment than are horizontal communications (which depend on informal interpersonal relations). The study shows that vertical communication from leaders is the best predictor of organizational commitment (Postmes et al., 2001). Postmes et al. (2001) note that people tend to have different foci of identification and commitment. Therefore, formal communications can better create commitment (Postmes et al., 2001). It seems that employees' interpersonal relations tend to be most relevant to an employee's personal identity and less relevant to social identity and social identification (Tajfel, 1978). Thus, the types of communication which are less concerned with interpersonal relations and more concerned with organizational and work-related issues tend to be more powerful as determinants of commitment because they are more relevant to one's self-definition as a member of the organization (Postmes et al., 2001).

Employee brand support in universities

An institution's members should have the same or at least similar values to those of their institution (Trim, 2003). The institutions, therefore, need to base their activities on the organization's brand values in order to encourage employees to support the brand in their behavior. In the branding literature, the relationship between the brand and the employees is conceptualized as their *living the brand* (e.g., Ind, 2007; Karmark, 2005; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). The previous section names several authors who list the roles which an employee plays as a living brand (Karmark, 2005), such as delivering the brand (Kunde, 2000), being brand champion (Ind, 2007) and brand ambassador (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001), co-creator of the brand (Schultz, 2005) and brand citizenship (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). Gummesson (1987 cited in Burmann & Zeplin, 2005, p.282) also coins the term 'part-time marketers' for:

those employees outside of marketing or sales [who] emphasize that they have a major indirect influence on the customer brand experience through their responsibility for the quality of the company's products and services and through their roles as internal supplier/service provider for those employees with customer contact.

In addition, Burmann & Zeplin (2005) define the kind of employee behavior that supports the organization brand as brand citizenship behavior. They find that if employees are asked to 'live the brand', the employees do so, representing a brand citizenship behavior which entails:

[i]ndividual voluntary behaviors outside of role expectations (non-enforceable functional extra-role behaviors) that are not directly or explicitly acknowledged by the formal reward system and which, in aggregate, enhance the performance of the organization (Organ, 1988 cited in Burmann & Zeplin, 2005, p.282).

In terms of brand commitment as part of employee brand support, training programs and internal communications which convey an organization's brand values can create brand commitment (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005), implying that "employees perceive the relationship with the organization to be a positive one [and] worthy of maintaining" (King & Grace, 2008, p.9). However, Burmann and Zeplin (2005, p.284) define the term 'brand commitment' as "the extent of psychological attachment of employees to the brand, which influences their willingness to exert extra effort towards reaching the brand goals". Morhart et al. (2009) also refer to the extra role brand building activities as 'employee brand-building behavior'.

In the literature, Baker and Balmer (1997) indicate that communications are crucial for managing academic staff's brand support behavior in higher education institutions. However,

several studies on internal branding (e.g., Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2003, 2006; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Morhart et al., 2009) also pay attention to leaders of organizations as an important factor in persuading employees to support the brand in their behavior. In the next section, the significance of the influence of leaders on internal branding is reviewed, on the basis of the literature.

Transformational leadership in universities

Leaders are those who are able to influence a group of individuals towards the achievement of a particular goal (Cartmella, Binsardi, McLean, 2011; Drouillard & Kleiner, 1996). They are the group of stakeholders who provide the organization with time, skills and human capital commitment (Hill & Jones, 1992). Leaders tend to play a critical role in shaping an organization's value and orientation (Jordan, 1973; Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Several authors note the likely effect of the leaders' values (Webster 1988), demographics and characteristics (Smith et al., 1994) as well as their capability and experience in planning and organization (Felton, 1959) on their ability to effectively manage organizational activities. Kotter (1990a, 1990b) argues that leaders are different from management because leaders are expected to manage and deal with changes within the organization better. To ensure effective implementation of marketing plans, effective leadership is one of the most important foundations to establish in an organization (Dibb & Simkin, 2000).

The studies on internal branding note that the leadership characteristics of leaders are likely to influence internal branding (e.g., Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2009). Burmann and Zeplin (2005, p.292) state that "there are two brand-relevant levels of leadership to be distinguished: the macro level refers to the role of the CEO and executive board in the brand management process, while the micro level deals with the personal

leadership of executives throughout the organization”. According to Vallaster and de Chernatony (2009), leaders throughout the organization play a crucial role in internal branding by being responsible for defining and driving a corporate brand’s identity while encouraging the connection between employees’ behavior and the desired brand identity. Vallaster and de Chernatony (2006) note that leaders can influence internal brand building through initiating and facilitating behavioral changes consistent with the desired brand.

Leaders are likely to influence behavioral changes which are consistent with brand-supportive behavior (Mosley, 2007; Kunde, 2000). As communications from leaders can be the best predictor of organizational commitment (Postmes et al., 2001), the leaders, thus, tend to play an active role in ensuring that employees deliver services appropriately aligned to the brand. The leaders can communicate the brand messages through their behavior (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005), provide the meaning of the brand to employees and encourage the employees to work together as a team (Ind, 2007). Gad (2003) supports the view that there are many cases of very communicatively skilled leaders who create the communication concept which gives employees an ideal to work towards.

Vallaster and de Chernatony (2005, p.187) suggest that “leaders encourage brand supporting employee behavior by providing a clear brand vision and by facilitating social interaction”. In addition, Vallaster and de Chernatony (2006, p.777) argue that “leaders facilitate employee brand commitment by acting as a role model, communicating in a manner supporting the desired brand identity”. Furthermore, according to Burmann and Zeplin (2005, p.292), it is likely that the organization’s members will take internal branding efforts seriously only if they are supported by the words and actions of the organization’s leaders. Moreover, a study by King and Grace (2005) reveals that leadership is one of the key factors affecting

employees' behavior in support of a brand. Thus, in order to ensure consistency in the employees' brand support behavior, Henkel et al. (2007) suggest that leadership training should be provided to the leaders of an organization.

In the literature, the characteristics of leaders within an organization are likely to encourage employees' brand commitment by influencing the culture of the organization (Schein, 1983; Kotter & Heskett, 1992). According to the types of control defined by Jaworski (1988, p.26), this situation may occur because of the informal control mechanisms. Informal controls are "unwritten, typically worker-initiated mechanisms which influence the behavior of individuals or groups ... This informal control may or may not be supportive of the stated marketing objectives" (Jaworski, 1988, p.26). However, informal controls are characterized by personal interaction between leaders and employees, which can be seen as "social control" and/or "culture control"¹ (Jaworski, 1988; Henkel et al., 2007).

In a higher education institution context, educational institutions are more concerned with the quality of leadership and the need to develop organizational leadership (Dearlove, 1995; Askling, Bauer & Marton, 1999). Moreover, it has been concluded that leadership is needed for higher education institutions if they are to perform effectively (e.g., Jarrett Report, 1985 cited in Barry, Chandler, & Clark, 2001, p.89; Cohen & March, 1986; Pounder, 2001). According to Dearlove (1995, p.167), academics tend to prefer being left alone to do their own work, typically teaching and research. For this reason, "they may be prepared to trust empathetic leaders to do their organizational thinking for them" (Dearlove, 1995, p.167).

¹ The three types of informal control are self-control, social control and cultural control (Jaworski, 1988)

Jaworski (1988, p.27) explains that: "by self-control an individual establishes personal objectives, monitors their attainment and adjusts behavior if off course". According to the internal branding literature, *self-control* is sometimes called '*ongoing individual behavior*' (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006).

Moreover, higher education institutions should pay more attention to the quality of leadership, due to the changes in government policies which give universities more responsibility and authority (Askling et al., 1999) and the increase of competition in the higher education sector, which encourage universities to act in a more business-like manner (Davies, Hides & Casey, 2001).

The institutions which are interested in the capacity to change should also be concerned about the quality of their leadership (Dearlove, 1995). Ramsden (1998) agrees that the use made of leadership in higher education institutions is its ability to produce change and also to align and motivate followers. In the higher education context, Ramsden (1998, p.8) argues that “leadership is about tensions and balances”. He goes into the concept of leadership in higher education institutions:

We must trust people - but not everyone can be trusted. We must focus on traditional academic values - but we must also respond to new demands from employees, companies, governments and students. We must look outwards to the strategic advantage of our work unit; but we should never neglect internal processes and relations. We must listen and consult; but we must have the wisdom to know when the advice received is correct ... We must mentor our staff; we must also address our performance. ... we must ensure the scholarly productivity of our colleagues. And we need to decide the degree to which our careers as academics are to be traded against our careers as academic managers (Ramsden, 1998, p.9).

The focus of leadership studies is to find how leaders attempt to persuade group members to achieve the group's goals (Bargh, Boccock, Scott & Smith, 2000). House (1971), for example, considers the motivational functions of the leader – for instance, making personal

rewards both intrinsic (e.g., work satisfaction) and extrinsic (e.g., promotions and salary increases), as well as ensuring that each person's work has the necessary direction and support to attain its goals. However, in order to be successful, a leader may need a particular style of leadership, depending on the situation and which style will enable them to exert influence over the group members (Fiedler, 1967).

Several authors (e.g., Vallater & de Chernatony, 2003; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Morhart et al., 2009) agree that transformational leadership characteristics tend to be the most effective in influencing employees' brand support behavior. In addition, transformational leadership has primarily been identified by those leadership characteristics which produce greater changes in educational institutions (e.g., Leithwood, 1992; Pounder, 2001; Fink, 2005). According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership tends to be concerned with the process of encouraging one's followers to accomplish great work (Burns, 1978; Northouse, 2004). Transformational leadership results in employees' performance which goes well beyond what is expected (den Hartog, van Muijen & Koopman, 1997; Northouse, 2004). This type of leadership is concerned with the performance of followers and with developing followers to their fullest potential (Bass & Avolio, 1990; Avolio, 1999).

Burns (1978) noted that the transformational leader recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower. However, beyond that, the transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs and engages the full persons of followers. In addition, Northouse (2004, p.171) provides a good conclusion to Burns' transformational leadership theory (1978): that "[transformational leadership] refers to the process whereby an individual engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower". However, the

characteristics of transformational leadership have been identified as follows (Bass & Avolio, 1990; Northouse, 2004): 1) idealization influence or charisma is an attribute of leaders who act as strong role models for their followers and provide them with a clear vision and sense of mission. The followers identify with these leaders and want to imitate them; 2) inspirational motivation is attributed to leaders who communicate high expectations to their followers, inspiring them through motivation to become committed to and a part of the shared vision within the organization; 3) intellectual stimulation comes from leaders who stimulate their followers to be creative and innovative and to challenge their own beliefs and values and those of the leaders and the organization; and 4) individual consideration is given by leaders who provide a supportive climate in which they listen carefully to the individual needs of followers and act as advisers trying to assist specific ways of working. In line with Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), Burmann and Zeplin (2005, p.293) note that “transformational leadership with regard to the brand can be described as leaders’ behaviors that influence the value systems and aspirations of the individual members of the organization and induce them to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of the brand.”

Along with the studies on internal branding (e.g., Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2003; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Morhart et al., 2009), transformational leadership characteristics tend to be the most effective ones in influencing employees’ brand support behavior. However, a qualitative study conducted by Burmann and Zeplin (2005) found that the characteristics of ‘charisma’ and ‘inspiration’ were mentioned, unprompted, several times in their interviews as success factors for internal branding, while the characteristics of intellectual stimulation and individual consideration were not mentioned. Therefore, the relevance of the transformational leaders for internal branding still remains to be specified (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). A recent study conducted by Morhart et al. (2009) finds that leaders with transformational leadership

characteristics have a positive impact on an increase in the brand-building behaviors of employees.

Discussion

Ind (2007) claims that values are not created but rather already exist in an organization; the important question is how well they are expressed and embedded. The emphasis of the present paper has been to understand the effects of the internal communication tools which higher educational institutions use to communicate, express and embed brand values among employees, in order to ensure that these people behave in alignment with the desired brand. The study highlights, in line with Karmark (2005), that internal branding can be seen from two perspectives: 1) a marketing and communications based perspective and 2) a norms and values communications based perspective. However, some scholars suggest that the norms and values communications based perspective, which emphasizes the (indirect) control of the underlying experience, thoughts and feelings which influence behavior (Karmark, 2005), may not be applicable in the university context (de Boer et al., 2007). On the other hand, the marketing and communications based perspective which focuses on using direct controls, internal communications, training and development, used carefully to ensure that people are committed and understand the whys and hows of brand delivery (Karmark, 2005), tends to be more appropriate for a study on internal branding in the higher education context. In addition, from the marketing and communication based perspective, brand values are diffused throughout the organization from the top downwards (Karmark, 2005), which is similar to the management styles which universities in most parts of the world significantly experience (Tsai & Beverton, 2007). Hence, the study of internal branding in universities and its consequences from a marketing and communication based perspective, together with its

relevant underlying mechanisms (i.e., the effects of internal branding factors) is important to fully comprehend the way in which a brand can resonate among all its stakeholders.

Covering internal branding from the two different perspectives, we highlight the potential effects of internal branding arising from these perspectives. Specifically, the current discussion suggests that internal branding is generally implemented in order to communicate, express and embed brand values among employees. That is, when internal branding activities are implemented in service organizations, employees are likely to behave in alignment with the brand of their organization. This is the key purpose of internal branding, and where our introduction to transformational leadership comes in.

The definitions of transformational leadership as discussed above suggest that a transformational leader is likely to motivate employees' brand support by providing a supportive climate, i.e., being a role model, acting as an adviser and giving positive and constructive feedback. As Berry and Parasuraman (1991 cited in Simoes & Dibb, 2001, p.219) state:

Internalizing the brand involves explaining and selling the brand to employees. It involves sharing with employees the research and strategy behind the presented brand. It involves creative communication of the brand to employees. It involves training employees in brand-strengthening behaviors. It involves rewarding and celebrating employees whose actions support the brand. Most of all, internalizing the brand involves *involving* employees in the care and nurturing of the brand.

In conclusion, we also note that while both the marketing and communications based perspective and the norms and values communications based perspective have their benefits,

they also have some inherent limitations. Therefore, we suggest that organizations use a combination of both perspectives. Thus, a more holistic approach may be achieved, and the present paper has adapted and examined several streams of literature, including internal branding and its consequence, and leadership theories, in a university context. The comprehensive review led to a discussion as to why it is necessary to examine and implement internal branding in universities from marketing and communication based perspectives. Following a comprehensive review of the literature, we noted that a universal definition of the concept of internal branding has not yet been proposed (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). Hence, based on the discussion above, *internal branding in this paper is taken to mean a way to enable employees to understand the values inherent in the brand and organization in order for them to deliver the brand promises to the consumers in their day-to-day operations.*

Conclusion

In this article, the internal branding in universities has been evaluated, mainly on the basis of a review of the literature in marketing and brand management, higher education management, corporate communication and human resource management. In addition, the concepts of internal branding and employee brand support have been discussed, in order to review the development of research on this topic. The study asked what the theoretical relationship is, if any, between internal branding activities (i.e., employee brand support) and transformational leadership. It was found that transformation leadership, despite being little researched in the internal branding context, remains the pivotal element to the successful implementation of internal branding. As discussed comprehensively above, transformational leadership provides space for intellectual stimulation and consideration of individuals that are present at universities.

In addition, it was further found that internal branding relates to the alignment of employee behavior with brand values (e.g., Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2004; Aurand, Gorchels & Bishop, 2005; Mosley, 2007). In a university context, employees and academics are likely to play an integral role in the branding process. With transformational leadership, this alignment can be achieved. It is worth mentioning that there are very few studies available within this area. Therefore, more research into this new area is encouraged. Specifically, we encourage future studies to answer questions such as: what is needed to implement internal branding in higher education institutions? What can be learned from past literature to best implement internal branding? Answering these questions may provide more action-oriented guidelines for the successful implementation of internal branding, which should be of interest to university managers.

The study is not without its limitations, which provide fruitful venues for future studies. We acknowledge that while universities are indeed behaving more like corporations in terms of their focus on bottom line results and in some cases their approaches to hiring and compensating some faculty, there remain distinct differences in the ways that professors interact with their supervisors and peers than do employees in other service sectors. For example, professors are hired and promoted solely on their content and teaching expertise, and this leads them to behave in ways that are very individually driven - in fact, the great professors have very distinct personalities and 'individual' brands. They are not sent to training, nor could anyone hope to influence them to act 'according to brand'². Future studies could investigate how such individual brands co-exist and interact with the broader university brand.

² We thank an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this important discussion.

Additionally, within universities, individual schools, labs, colleges, institutes, etc. have strong and distinct individual brands. This is another level of branding that must be considered in future studies. That said, universities do need to be able to articulate their underlying mission, expectations, and values to current and prospective staff and faculties. Employees other than professors might be influenced by some top-down marketing approaches, but more research is needed to determine this. We recommend that future studies engage in more direct research that would shed some light on the significant differences in terms of governance, hiring, supervision, reward structures, and implications of brands within higher education, and to add to this line of research, some more nuance that would lead to more actionable and practical solutions to internal branding in higher education.

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Table 1: Differences between internal marketing and internal branding

Internal branding	Internal marketing
Resource-based management	Customer-based management
Communicates brand values to employees, in order for them to understand those values which lead to appropriate actions and behavior.	Communicates the customer brand promise and the attitudes and behavior expected from employees to deliver on this promise by ensuring that they understand their role in delivering a customer experience.
Reinforces a common value-based culture, typically attached to some form of corporate mission and vision.	Trains and effectively motivates customer-contact employees in order to provide customer satisfaction
“The companies with consistent, distinctive and deeply held values tended to outperform those companies with a less clear and articulated ethos” (Collins & Porras, 1995 cited in Mosley, 2007, p.128).	Focuses staff attention on the internal activities which need to be changed in order to enhance marketplace performance
Inside-out approach	Outside-in approach
Note Internal branding is seen as a consequence of increasing interest in internal marketing (Hankinson, 2004)	

Source: Based on the literature review and categorizations by Mosley (2007)

Table 2: Differences between a marketing and communications based perspective and a norms and values communications based perspective

Marketing and communications based perspective: internal brand communication, training and development, brand books and manuals	Norms and values communications based perspective: fostering brand identification through culture-embedding mechanisms, storytelling and events
Communication and implementation	Values-based management
Relying on the brand values as guidelines for the employees to live by when at work	Builds on the premise that the personal values of employees become congruent with the brand values
Direct control – top-down management: a formal socialization process	Normative control: an informal socialization process
Vertical communications, formal communications, work-related communications up and down the organizational hierarchy (Postmes, Tanis & de Wit, 2001)	Horizontal communications, informal interpersonal and socio-emotional interaction with close colleagues and others at the same level in the organization (Postmes et al., 2001)
Corporate identity perspective: anchored in a strategic and visual perspective with a focus on identity as corporate communication; top management has an explicit role in the formulation of corporate identity and decides how the organization is made to appear to external audiences (Riel, 1995)	Organizational identity perspective (e.g., Hatch & Schultz, 1997): anchored in the cultural perspective with a focus on the way in which organizational members make sense of issues relating to the question of ‘who we are as an organization’ in the context of the organizational culture and history, a collective shared understanding of the organization's distinctive values and characteristics (Albert, Ashforth & Dutton, 2000)

Source: Based on this literature review (the categorizations were adapted from Karmark, 2005)

Table 3: Past academic papers on ‘Education Branding’

Author(s) and their contributions	Summary
Kotler and Levy (1969) expand the concept of marketing to non-profit organizations.	Marketing can and should be implemented in non-profit organizations, including higher education institutions (HEIs).
Litten (1980) comments on the benefits and risks of implementing marketing in higher educational intuitions in the USA, and offers ideas for maximizing the benefits and minimizing the risks of implementing marketing in educational institutions.	In order to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks of implementing marketing in educational institutions, coordination between the marketing profession, the market research industry and higher education is required for creating appropriate marketing techniques.
Kotler and Fox (1985) provide an implementation guideline for employing marketing in educational institutions	Strategic marketing is important for education institutions to develop and deliver educational services which meet customers’ expectations.
Klayton (1993) examines the application of marketing research in a HEI.	HEIs can improve their programs by using marketing research in order to target potential students; to create data bases on current, former, and potential students and to design new programs.
Naude and Ivy (1999) examine the implementation of marketing strategies in old and new UK HEIs.	Although marketing activities were found to be implemented in HEIs, the marketing strategies of old HEIs are not as aggressive as new HEIs.
Ford et al. (1999) examine the use of performance analysis as a marketing strategic tool, using a sample of business students in New Zealand and the USA.	Performance analysis can be used as a marketing strategic tool to assess customer-perceived service quality in order for an HEI to differentiate its services from the services of competitors.
Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) examine the applicability of international marketing in UK HEIs.	Pricing, product and promotion play central roles in the international marketing strategy for HEIs.
Trim (2003) reviews the literature on the partnership arrangements in HEIs and proposes a marketing framework for managing the partnership arrangements.	A marketing framework for HEIs is proposed for the HEIs to audit, evaluate and manage partnership arrangements. An institution should establish a center of entrepreneurship which makes it easier to link academia and industry in order to gain additional revenue from marketable ideas.
Brookes (2003) examines the need for marketing approach in US and UK HEIs in order to satisfy the changes in government policies	Marketing management in HEIs helps the institutions to comply with the changes in government policies by, for example, increasing the opportunities to attract alternative sources of funding and to provide a better quality of services to meet students’ expectations.
Hammond et al. (2004) examine the relationship between business school performance and marketing planning activities in US HEIs. Then, Hammond et al. (2007) extend the previous study of Hammond et al. (2004) in order to further investigate the applicability of marketing planning activities in these HEIs, and to cross-index the results to the organizational characteristics of the responding institutions.	There is a positive impact of marketing planning activities on university business school performance (Hammond et al., 2004, 2007). However, the study by Hammond et al. (2007) shows that too many business schools assume that the initiation of marketing in the institutions would not significantly improve their performance.
Maringe (2005a) explores the problems of marketing implementation using evidence from HEIs in Zimbabwe and propose a marketing framework for interrogating the problem in higher education marketing.	To avoid the problems of marketing implementation, HEIs should identify their core business, develop their curriculum based on the core business and base their marketing on a curriculum centered marketing (CORD) model because it is a tool for interrogating the problem in higher education marketing.
Maringe (2005b) examines marketing perceptions and practices of marketing in HEIs in the developing world, from the perspectives of students, institutions’ marketers and vice chancellors in Zimbabwe HEIs.	From the employees’ point of view, marketing activities are implemented in HEIs. However, from the customers’ (students)’ point of view, HEIs still communicate inadequate information about product, price, place, promotion, physical evidence and people. In addition, the elements of product, price and people are seen by the students as the most important elements to influence their decision where to study.

Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) review the literature on marketing in HEIs in an international context in order to establish the scope of higher education marketing, to identify gaps in the research literature and to make recommendations for further research in this field.	The literature on marketing in HEIs ought to be more coherent. In addition, the theoretical models should reflect the nature of the education services.
Ivy (2001) investigates how marketing is used by HEIs in the UK and South Africa to create and differentiate their image in the higher education market	Old HEIs, new HEIs and polytechnic colleges convey their image through the use of marketing tools in different ways in order to create their unique position in the market.
Belanger et al. (2002) examines the relationships between the image of a HEI (in Canada), students' expectations and students' actual experience after spending one year on campus	Students' expectations depend on the institution's image as absorbed by students. Moreover, the students' experience which is congruent with that image can increase the likelihood of student retention. Thus, institutions should ensure congruence between the institutional image and the actual experience of students.
Gray et al. (2003) investigates the media used by students in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong to acquire information on overseas HEIs.	University publications and websites are effective media for a HEI to communicate brand messages to their target students.
Jevons (2006) discusses the HEI's situation and stresses the need for HEIs to develop and communicate their brand.	HEIs should employ branding by creating and communicating a meaningful brand which differentiates their service from other HEIs in order to attract not only potential students, but also potential staff, together with research clients.
Stensaker (2007) addresses the benefits and dangers of using branding as a strategy for managing HEI and comments on the potential relationship between branding and organizational change.	<p>Institutions should view their staff and the students of the institution as the best marketers. In order for them to buy into the branding process, the brand should be rooted in the distinctive institutional characteristics.</p> <p>Branding can enhance institutional development and stimulate organizational change by linking organizational identity and the external image of the organization. However, through the institution's development and organizational change, the institution should maintain the social responsibility of HEI.</p>
Bunzel (2007) discusses the trend of HEIs to engage in marketing and branding programs, as the activities are expected to enhance the university's reputation and to have a positive influence on university ranking.	Although it is unclear that marketing and branding activities cause significant changes in a university's ranking, rankings still rely on reputation assessment which can be enhanced by marketing and branding activities.
Chapleo (2010) investigates the factors which define successful university brands in UK	For the success of branding, university should pay more attention to internal brand engagement.
Baker and Balmer (1997) describe the development of a corporate identity/visual identity program, using a major UK university as a case study.	A strong visual identity has a positive impact on leading the university's internal stakeholders to be loyal to the institution. A weak visual identity may occur due to weaknesses in corporate strategy, corporate culture and/or formal corporate communications policies.
Melewar and Akel (2005) analyze the strategic intent behind a UK university's corporate identity program based on the four components of the corporate identity model developed by Melewar and Jenkins.	The university's new corporate identity management strategy moves from a decentralized towards a more centralized management style. The management of corporate identity in universities should take hold of the multidisciplinary character of corporate identity in order to control the institution's identity.
Balmer and Liao (2007) investigate student corporate brand identification towards the brand in a UK HEI, the business school of the institution and the overseas collaborative partner institute of the institution in Asia.	In order to produce high brand identification, senior managers should seek to employ the management of brand values and brand promise by ensuring alignment between brand promise and corporate identity and employing all the elements of the corporate marketing mix.
Atakan and Eker (2007) analyze a Turkish HEI's corporate social responsibility management using concepts from the Corporate Identity and Corporate Social Responsibility literature.	'Philanthropy' is one of the main elements of the institution's corporate identity program. The university should be seen to have altruistic motives for its social responsibility initiatives.

Celly and Knepper (2010) describe the process of developing a corporate visual identity system in a US multi-campus university and analyze the key issues in developing this system in order to build the university brand.	A challenge for a large multi-campus university in building the brand is the lack of common identity between the university's main campus and its small campuses. As a result, when students from the small campus go to study in the larger campus (or a main campus), they do not feel that they are really a part of the larger university's system.
Judson et al. (2006) investigate the impact of brand communication activities of US HEIs on internal recipients' behaviors from the sport coaches' perspectives.	Internal brand communication activities have a positive impact on employees' understanding and incorporating the brand into their work activities.
Whisman (2009) examines case studies from businesses and HEIs, as well as reviews of the literature and research, in order to inspect the essential role which internal branding plays in successful university settings.	Internal branding helps an institution overcome internal resistance to branding efforts. It helps the institution take an identity-development strategy beyond traditional approaches (e.g., new logos and advertising campaigns) in order to take an embedded cultural approach which guides the ways in which the institution should run its activities (e.g., communications, fund-raising, marketing, enrolment management and program development).
Judson et al. (2009) investigate the internal promotion of the brand within a US higher education industry from the administrators' perspectives.	A university's brand image has a strong impact on leading university administrators to do their job, but less of an impact upon how they manage their staff and how their staff reflect the brand in their everyday work. Moreover, private university administrators are likely to have a greater brand clarity than public university administrators.